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2004-2005 President

MPHA Registration Is On The Way!

Keep an eye peeled for registration for the 68th Annual Mississippi Public Health Association Meeting in September. The location is ready, the speakers are almost set, and we're looking forward to making 2005 our best meeting yet! Special thanks go to the Executive and Planning Committees who've worked so hard this year to get things going. *The registration deadline is going to be earlier this year, so please be prepared to send your registration in as soon as possible!*

Calling All Candidates

The MPHA Executive Committee is currently taking nominations for the position of President-Elect and APHA Delegate. If you or someone you know may be interested in either of these positions, please contact a member of the Executive Committee to make the nomination. The Committee will select two candidates for each of the positions from those who are nominated, and elections will be held at the Annual Meeting. The President-Elect will serve as President for the 2006-2007 cycle; the APHA delegate will serve a three-year term. You must be a member of MPHA to run for either position, and you must also be a current member of APHA to run for the position of delegate.

Changes Proposed for MPHA By-Laws

In our last newsletter, we listed the issues that will be on the ballot for MPHA members to vote on this year. In this newsletter, we review those proposed changes more fully.

As a reminder, the changes proposed for the by-laws are:

1. To increase dues structure for all levels of membership,
2. To give the Executive Committee the authority to hire an Executive Director for MPHA,
3. To create an MPHA Outstanding Member Award to be given annually, and
4. To assign the parliamentary duties to the President-Elect.

Increase dues structure

The Mississippi Public Health Association's current dues structure requires a contribution of only \$12 annually from its members, the lowest dues rate in the nation. The Southeast (Region IV) average for dues is approximately \$30 annually, with membership rates (other than ours) that range from \$20 in Tennessee to \$45 in Florida. The Executive Committee is proposing a change in the rates to \$18 annually for regular membership, \$9 for retirees, and \$7 for students, which will still be the lowest rates in the Southeast and among the lowest in the nation. With an average of 400 members, the raise in the membership fees will garner the Association an additional \$2,400 each year. To put that into perspective, the raise will cover the cost of one break at the Annual Meeting each year. Last year was the first in several years that the Association was able to "make" any money from the Annual Meeting, and has had to dip into reserves created from dues and other revenue sources. An increase in the rates at this point would help maintain the financial stability of the Association.

Executive Director

While it may seem at cross-purposes to call for our first paid position while discussing financial difficulties, the two are actually closely linked. MPHA is moving toward becoming a more independent and professional organization, and as such needs to secure funding from sources other than our traditional partners. It's difficult, and could create ethical questions, to solicit financial support as an employee of a state agency. A paid Executive Director, on the other hand, is free to speak, solicit, and work with other entities to secure funding to help the Association meet its educational goals and mission.

The Executive Committee would have the "authority to hire" an appropriate person for the position of Executive Director, but would not be required to do so if, after further review, the financial situation did not seem stable or if a suitable person was not found. Details regarding salary, etc. were intentionally not placed in this resolution because of the difficulty involved in changing the salary, adding bonuses or incentives, or negotiating hours. If specifics were placed within this proposal, each of those specifics would have to be voted on by the entire membership for a change to occur.

The intent of the Committee members at this time is to hire a person who, within two to three years of their start date, is bringing in enough funds from outside entities to cover his or her salary and expenses, in addition to taking on a significant role in helping coordinate the Annual Meeting each year. The long-term goal is to continually improve the educational quality of the Annual Meeting and add other training opportunities such as a mid-year conference.

Finally, MPHA exists as a member of the American Public Health Association. The APHA is in the process of working to expand and increase its membership at the state level, and as part of that process is looking for ways to help all state associations hire an Executive Director in the near future. Many states do have Executive Directors, and in those states the Association is clearly a leader in public health issues and has a greater voice at the national level in setting APHA policy. Mississippi has a long history of excellent public health service, and we deserve the opportunity to grow and improve our Association.

MPHA Outstanding Member Award

Many people work at the grassroots level for years within the Association, yet never receive recognition for what they do. This award would provide the opportunity to thank those who've gone above and beyond in their work and have given years of service and dedication to the Association. As with the other Prestige Awards, the Executive Committee would select the winner from among nominees. Nominations could come from the entire membership.

President-Elect to Assume Parliamentary Duties

The President-Elect has few "designated" duties stated in the By-laws, while the parliamentary position is one that is underutilized. By combining the two, the President-Elect would take a more robust role during his or her planning term, and would have a better and clearer understanding of the role he or she will assume as President.

Questions?

If you have questions or comments regarding these changes to the By-Laws, please contact Terri Sasser (601-266-5251 or terri.sasser@usm.edu) or Larry Rouse (601-544-6766 or larry.rouse@msdh.state.ms.us).

Thank you, and we look forward to seeing you in September!

www.msdh.state.ms.us/mpha